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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 001163

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/23/2016

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SUBJECT: SETTLEMENTS/FENCE: MOFAZ ANNOUNCES ACCELERATED
TIMETABLE FOR "CONVERGENCE PLAN"

REF: A) TEL AVIV 1065 B) TEL AVIV 0940

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones; Reasons: 1.4 (B,D)

1. (U) This message contains an action recommendation.
Please see paragraph four.

2. (U) In recent press interviews, DefMin Shaul Mofaz discussed additional details of -- and an accelerated timetable for -- Kadima's plan to disengage from parts of the West Bank and unilaterally establish new borders. Mofaz reiterated that the GOI prefers to take such steps in agreement with the Palestinian Authority in a manner consistent with the Roadmap, but added "if we see that we do not have a partner, then I think we will need to take our fate into our own hands and make a decision where it is right to be and where it is not right to be." He predicted that the GOI will take unilateral action "with the next two years," most likely in 2007 after seeking international support.

3. (SBU) Mofaz said that in pursuit of what Olmert is calling the "convergence plan," the GOI plans to complete the separation barrier, evacuate isolated settlements, and incorporate others into the large settlement blocs. According to Mofaz, the GOI will retain control over the Jordan Valley, Maale Adumim, Ariel, Gush Etzion, Qarnei Shomron, Qedumin, Ofra-Beit El, and Rehan-Shaked. (Note: This list is nearly identical to the one presented by Kadima candidate Avi Dichter on March 5. As reported in ref (b), Dichter included Hebron-Qiryat Arba, but did not mention Rehan-Shaked. End note). Mofaz also insisted that the GOI will retain a "free hand" to act militarily in the evacuated areas.

4. (C) Comment and action recommendation: Olmert and his advisers have made clear that they intend to implement the "convergence plan" and have made support for this goal a condition for other parties joining the post-election coalition. Olmert told reporters on March 22 that "I have presented a political plan whose main objective is an attempt to determine permanent borders for Israel during my term in office." As noted in ref (a), the outlines of the plan to annex settlement blocs and set Israel's borders along the barrier line push -- and in points clearly exceed -- current U.S. policy and the position on settlements contained in the President's letter of April 14, 2004. We recommend that the USG reinforce our views with the next government immediately after it is formed to avoid any future misunderstandings.
End comment.

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JONES